DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 462 188 PS 030 141

TITLE	Collaboration 101 Guidebook.
INSTITUTION	Illinois State Dept. of Human Services, East St. Louis. Head Start State Collaboration Office.
SPONS AGENCY	Administration for Children, Youth, and Families (DHHS), Washington, DC. Head Start Bureau.
PUB DATE	2001-09-00
NOTE	41p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Illinois Head Start State Collaboration Office, 10 Collinsville Avenue, Suite 203, East St. Louis, IL 62201. Tel: 618-583-2083; Fax: 618-583-2091; e-mail: dhsd60a2@dhs.st.il.us; e-mail: dhsd60a4@dhs.state.il.us.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom (055) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Agencies; *Agency Cooperation; *Cooperation; Day Care; Early Intervention; Low Income Groups; Models; Partnerships in Education; Planning; Preschool Education; Program Descriptions; Self Evaluation (Groups)
IDENTIFIERS	*Project Head Start

ABSTRACT

Head Start has a long history of providing comprehensive child and family development services to low-income children and families. Noting that this history can serve as a model as early childhood and care programs work toward greater collaboration with other programs and agencies to improve child well-being and help move families toward self-sufficiency, this guidebook provides guidance in successful collaboration practices. The guidebook begins with a definition of collaboration and information on the history of Head Start in meeting families' changing needs, meeting child care needs, and meeting community needs. The guidebook then describes some commonly used collaboration approaches and barriers to successful collaboration. The guidebook also provides suggestions for overcoming barriers, delineates principles of successful partnerships, and details tips for leading meetings. The bulk of the guidebook details a step-by-step process for developing collaborative relationships involving: (1) planning for collaboration; (2) identifying potential partners; (3) identifying the benefits of collaboration; (4) developing the collaborative partnership; (5) managing the partnership; (6) monitoring and assessing the collaboration; (7) strengthening the relationship; and (8) evaluating the collaboration. Included are sample forms related to each step in the process. A list of Illinois Head Start programs that have developed successful collaborative partnerships in their community is provided, along with web site and print resources for collaboration. The guidebook concludes with descriptions of the following Illinois programs: Head Start, Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) early childhood programs, ISBE early childhood special education, Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) child care programs, and IDHS early intervention programs. (KB)

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COLLABORATION 101

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GUIDEBOOK

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to the following Head Start Directors and their staff for reviewing the contents of this guidebook:

Ms Denise Conbright - PACT Head Start

Ms Laura Hatch - BCMW Head Start

Ms Sherie Marten - NICAA Head Start

Ms Cathy Reed - SIUC Head Start

Ms Molly Parker - IDHS Migrant Head Start

Ms Jane Whitaker & Ms Linda Ruhs - Two Rivers Head Start

Ms Diane Stout - Circles of Learning

Ms Judy Veach - ERBA Head Start

Your comments and suggestions were greatly appreciated.

Special thanks to the Head Start programs, children and parents who shared their photographs for this book, including:

Illinois Migrant Head Start
SIUE Head Start
Tri-County Opportunities Council Head Start
SIUC Head Start

This guidebook was produced by the Illinois Head Start State Collaboration Office, a federal-state partnership, funded by U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Head Start Bureau, and the Illinois Department of Human Services. Copies can be requested by contacting the Collaboration Office at (618)583-2083/2088 or email us at dhsd60a2@dhs.state.il.us or dhsd60a4@dhs.state.il.us

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Collaboration Glossary

Definition and Background.....Page 1

Meeting Families' Needs.....Page 2

Meeting Child Care Needs.....Page 3

Meeting Community Needs.....Page 4

Collaboration Models/Options.....Page 5

Potential Barriers/Stand Traps.....Page 6

Creating the Partnership.....Page 7-12

*Look for useful information & tools after each step

Conclusion.....Page 12

Successful Collaboration Contacts.....Page 13

Collaboration Resources.....Page 13-14

Principles of Successful Partnerships-"Wisdom from Our Colleagues"..... Page 15

Making Partnership Meetings Work: Tips on Leading an Effective Meeting...Page 16

Early Childhood Program Descriptions.....Page 17

A COLLABORATION GLOSSARY

Assessment: *Observation, research, and other ways of learning about a current situation, environment, or status of performance.*

Care & education: *Services that nurture the development, learning, and well-being of young children and their families. Care and education programs include Head Start, child care centers, family child care homes, and private and public preschool programs.*

Collaboration: *A process by which agencies formally commit themselves on a long-term basis to work together to accomplish a common mission. This partnership necessitates a sharing of resources, power, and authority. It also requires organizations to blend their strengths as well as negotiate their differences with an underlying attitude of trust.*

Community: *A neighborhood, county, city, catchment area, school attendance area, or other formal or informal service district.*

Community assessment: *Gathering information about a community's needs, resources, and preferences to guide decision making. Most effective when it is an ongoing process that provides a way for the community to learn about and connect people with resources.*

Comprehensive services: *Education and resources that ensure that a broad range of care and support is available to children and families.*

Consensus: *A form of group decision making in which all opinions are heard and various alternatives are considered. After discussion, a collective decision is made that each member agrees to support.*

Continuity: *Support for children and families to ensure that experiences and expectations in one setting are connected to and meaningful in new settings. Settings include homes, child care centers, Head Start, family child care, and other places that offer care and education services.*

Partnership: *A group that makes a commitment to work together for a common purpose. A partnership with diverse membership brings important insights about the complex issues facing the group in their shared efforts.*

Provider: *The person who assumes responsibility for the care and education of young children.*

Q-Net: *The federally funded training and technical assistance network in Head Start. Ohio State University and University of Illinois (for disabilities services) hold these grants in Illinois.*

Shared Leadership: *A process through which responsibility is shared among participants in a team effort to reach a common goal.*

Transition: *A term used to describe the time between two different activities or environments.*

Adapted from the Texas HS-SC Project Early Care & Education Community Collaborative Tool Kit, 1997

Definition & Background

Collaboration is the process by which agencies formally commit themselves on a long-term basis to work together to accomplish a common mission.

Collaboration brings previously separate organizations into a new working structure that requires joint planning, training, implementation, and evaluation. This partnership also necessitates a sharing of resources, power, and authority. It requires organizations to blend their strengths as well as negotiate their differences with an underlying attitude of trust.

The goal of the partnership is comprehensive services for families that improve family outcomes.

- Texas Head Start State Collaboration Project, 1992

Progress has been made on both the state and federal levels to move toward greater collaboration between Head Start and other programs that provide services to low-income children and families. However, some barriers still exist and, whenever possible, communities should work together to create a common vision across all early care and education programs. We must be committed to improving collaborations with the intent to create a system that is more responsive to the needs of working parents and that supports opportunities for children to participate in high-quality programs that involve communities in the planning and implementation of the services.

With the realization of welfare reform across the nation, states have increased their investments in and placed emphasis on programs that provide child care and development assistance to families. Thus, there is an increased need for greater collaboration among all programs that provide services to children in an effort to improve child well being and help to move more families toward self-sufficiency. Head Start provides a vision of comprehensive services that all early childhood programs can benefit from, including a focus on the entire family, links to health and social services, and a well-developed staff training system. With its long history of providing comprehensive child and family development and services to low-income children and families, Head Start is recognized as a model program throughout the country and should play an essential role in collaboration.

MEETING FAMILIES' CHANGING NEEDS:

In its 35-year history, Head Start has developed many successful practices in parent involvement and family support services. This family focus practice reflects the interest in approaches to a child's development that promote learning in the context of home, school, and community.

As families needs change, it is critical that early care and education providers come together to provide comprehensive full day services to low-income families who are working and/ or in training programs. The process for helping families become self-sufficient involves a careful blend of providing needed services, reducing family isolation, expanding social support networks, and giving families an opportunity to contribute to and be valued by their community.

Many early care and education programs serve low-income families who are struggling to provide children with basic necessities and a warm, caring home. The majority of these families are living at or close to the poverty level and a substantial proportion receive some kind of public assistance. Some programs serve families with low levels of literacy, while others work with parents who are either attending school or employed in poorly paid jobs. Many of the children grow up in single-parent homes. The overall picture is that programs serve families with multiple-challenges including poverty and unemployment, domestic violence, illiteracy, social isolation, and substance abuse.

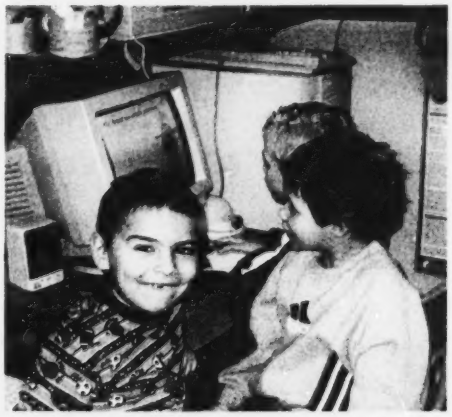
Early care and education programs can collaborate and develop strategies in their communities to address parents' needs by:

1. Developing programs that enhance parents' skills, knowledge, and motivation to be involved with their children's education.
2. Creating early childhood programs that support parents in their journey toward education and self-sufficiency.
3. Helping parents gain access to services which address their needs and use their strengths through partnerships with community agencies.
4. Creating "caring communities" for parents by providing social support and promoting participation in community planning.
5. Offering multiple services for families in one location that increase the availability in low-density areas.
6. Providing more flexible hours of service that fit the parents working, training, or educational schedules.
7. Providing care in an environment where siblings are present to offer the convenience of a single child care arrangement for working parents.

MEETING CHILD CARE NEEDS:

Most early care and education programs have commonalities:

- They all provide services to young children;
- They all have frequent contacts with parents;
- They may work with children who have special needs;
- They may work with the USDA nutrition program;
- They share a commitment to providing quality services for all children and families; and
- They all have a great deal of knowledge and experience to offer each other.



Young low-income children who are at risk often receive services and assistance from a variety of agencies. Frequently, these agencies provide fragmented services even though coordination and communication could help improve services for the child. Agencies often do not know what other service providers are doing, what services are already provided, or what information is already available to understand a child's needs.

In Illinois, leaders are helping develop collaboration between Head Start and other early care and education programs. Head Start programs are serving as core organizations, collaborating with community agencies and providing a central location where multiple agencies can work together to meet children's needs. Across the state, agencies are implementing programs that collaborate in a variety of ways. Such collaboration:

- reduces the fragmentation of services by ensuring continuity of care for children, who benefit greatly from a relationship with a primary caregiver in a single setting.
- builds a comprehensive support system for low-income children and families that increase their access to health and social services.
- increases the knowledge of service professionals about the needs of children and families.
- strengthens the local early childhood systems by helping them to get the most out of limited resources.
- builds upon all the community's resources in addressing the needs of children and families by expanding services in a cost-effective manner while maximizing the use of facilities.
- improves quality in early childhood settings by combining resources to: improve staff-child ratios, expand training for child care staff, increase the number of staff with child development credentials, purchase equipment and supplies for children, and enhance child care facilities.
- offers a range of settings that best meets the needs of the families by providing different options for the parent to choose from for their child's early care and education.

MEETING COMMUNITY NEEDS:

The United States is in the midst of significant reform efforts in education, health care, and social services that hold major, but unclear, implications for Head Start and other community service organizations in the years ahead. Head Start faces a central challenge posed by its mandate to be a comprehensive, community-based program, on one hand, and by its need to make reasonable judgments about what it can be expected to accomplish in the context of contemporary poverty, on the other. For many programs this raises questions about what it means to involve families in Head Start, the interdependence of Head Start and other community resources in efforts to achieve positive outcomes for children and families, and Head Start's role in relation to other organizations and resources in the community.

Today, it is increasingly difficult to meet all of the needs of low-income families, with full-time employment by low-income mothers, growing needs for mental health services, calls to improve family literacy, and rising community violence, to name a few contemporary pressures. But there are programs that have developed creative strategies for involving all parents, encouraging the participation of fathers, addressing community violence, providing family literacy and self-sufficiency programs, teaching in the context of multilingual classrooms, and linking Head Start with other community agencies. By collaborating, these programs have been able to:

- share information on particular children and families
- develop shared missions and integrated programs
- coordinate services more completely
- "braid" funds for shared purposes
- provide multiple services at a central site.

To develop partnerships, community agencies must come together to determine how to best meet the needs of the children and families that they serve. Community building action steps should include:

- conducting a joint community assessment to identify needs, problems, strengths, and community resources that will assist in developing partnerships. Head Start programs already do an in depth community assessment every three years, with annual updates.
- developing and using a planning tool for guidance in identifying needs and monitoring the development of partnerships.
- contacting community agencies for information, products, and services to help build collaboration.
- contacting local agencies to mobilize support for collaboration.
- reviewing research and planning guides to strengthen partnerships with parents and community agencies.
- examining other models of collaboration already in use.
- encouraging staff to collaborate with parents and community agencies in developing programs and services for children and families.

Collaborations can be instrumental in fostering fundamental changes in communities by: increasing parental involvement in community decision-making; increasing employment of low income families; and allowing community agencies to work together in serving low income families more effectively.

COLLABORATION MODELS/OPTIONS:

The following are a few commonly used approaches for collaboration.

Family Child Care and Head Start: *The Head Start program contracts with a network of, or individual, licensed family child care home providers who remain independent rather than becoming Head Start employees. The family child care provider is considered the Head Start teacher and receives support from Head Start staff, including training, technical assistance, supplies and materials, and participation in a provider support group. Head Start staff provides comprehensive social and health services to enrolled families. The provider may receive total funding from the Head Start program or receive reimbursement from child care subsidies along with funding from the Head Start program.*

Center-based Child Care/Head Start: *Head Start provides the social service and health staff, while paying the early care and education center for some or all of the cost of child development services. One variation might be having social service and health staff work for the center, which operates under a contract with Head Start grantee as a delegate agency. Another option is to contract for classroom space in the child care facility and place Head Start teachers in the classroom. In this model, child care subsidy funds and Head Start funds can be braided to support the cost of child care.*

Extended Day Head Start: *Head Start programs can access child care subsidy funds to pay for non-Head Start hours. This allows Head Start programs to develop full day/full year services within a Head Start facility. In Illinois, Head Start programs can collaborate with Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies and/or Site Administered child care agencies.*

Pre-Kindergarten At-Risk and Head Start: *Pre K At-risk programs and Head Start may share the responsibility of providing the early care and education services, with Head Start staff providing the social and health services for children and families.*

Many programs and communities have designed innovative approaches to combining funding streams and programs to provide high quality "seamless" services to children and families. They have all overcome challenges through their efforts. Although communication, funding policies, and program requirements may initially pose a challenge to collaboration, models continue to grow and thrive.

POTENTIAL BARRIERS/SAND TRAPS & HOW TO OVERCOME THEM:

All collaborations experience challenges. Some are inevitable, while others are dangerous sand traps that can be avoided by alert collaborative partners. Below are some common sand traps to avoid, or act upon if they appear.

Organizational:

- Deciding not to begin until all stakeholders are at the table;
- Failing to set clear ground rules;
- Losing sight of the partnership's purpose and mission;
- Choosing unattainable goals;
- Trying to handle too many issues or actions at once;
- Inadequate resources for carrying out plans;
- Adverse community relations or media attention;
- Not stopping to evaluate, reflect, and celebrate;
- Not acknowledging or avoiding conflict.

Leadership:

- Trying to maintain control by resisting power-sharing or shared decision-making;
- Allowing political pressure or individual partner self-interests to drive the collaborative;
- Lack of shared leadership;
- Not involving consumers, direct service staff, and policy-makers in critical decisions;
- Becoming too dependent on one or two partners to keep the collaborative going;
- Unrealistic expectations or demands.

Membership:

- Attempting to act before partners establish a sense of trust and ownership in a shared vision;
- Frequent turnover in partners or membership organizations;
- Unequal distribution of work or recognition of members;
- Not taking the time to involve opponents, who could easily block the collaborative mission or goals;
- Failing to recognize an individual partner's needs or self-interests; or
- Turf battles or power struggles among partners.

Adapted from Atelia Melaville and Martin Blank with Gelareh Asayesh, "Together We Can: A Guide for Crafting a Profamily System of Education and Human Services" (Wahington, D.C.: US Dept. of Education and US Dept. of Heath and Human Services, 1993).

Barriers to collaboration:

- Time
- Absence of Community Vision
- Resources
- Conflicting Requirements
- Attitude
- Turf-ism
- Lack of Shared Information
- Lack of Awareness of Need and/or Opportunity
- Loss of Autonomy
- Lack of Leadership
- Ineffective Inter-Or Intra-Agency Structures or Systems
- Comfort with the Status Quo and/or Resistance to Change

CREATING THE PARTNERSHIP:

Lines are being redrawn in the early care and education field. Where there used to be walls, there are now windows of opportunity. Programs that were once self-sufficient are reaching out to build seamless networks of community support. The change in attitude is reflected by a change in language: We now work in collaboration with our partners, linking together in the name of children and families.

- "Promising Partnerships" NHSA-1996

STEP 1

Planning-Intra-agency planning for collaboration is a process and takes some time to create. Most successful partnerships require the agencies to begin planning one year in advance of implementation and are based on community assessments. The planning process should include direct service staff, parents, and governing board of the agency. There are four elements of partnership planning:

A. Vision: The vision should be a systems-focused approach that will embrace partners as an integral part of future service delivery. The vision must include a clear understanding of where the collaboration is going based on goals, an assessment of the community at all levels, and a plan to accommodate and meet the future needs of children birth to five and their families.

B. Assessment: The assessment needs to be comprehensive and inclusive, identifying internal and external needs and strengths, include local and state levels, and based on the status of children and families. This process will allow collaboration to address families' needs to effectively provide a comprehensive system that respects, responds to, and empowers families.

C. Capacity: Examine your agency's current services, space, facilities, personnel, and the number of children and families served. Then determine if a partnership can help build the organization's capacity.

D. Relationship Development: Create and develop mutually respectful personal, professional, and political relationships with staff, parents, community leaders and organizations. To be successful, you must know and be familiar with the services and philosophies of the other agencies in the community. Building trust and cultivating openness takes time.

Before Partnering:

- **Look inward – clarifying and being able to articulate your program mission, goals, and culture.**
- **Look outward – building community resources and support.**

Page 7a is a checklist you can use to assess you agency's need to collaborate.

ASSESSING THE NEED FOR COLLABORATION

How are we doing on our own?

Are the lives of the children and families we serve improving? If not, why?
Have we recently reassessed our mission in light of the overlapping needs of our families?

Are services well-integrated within our own agency? Does staff working with the same families communicate frequently? Do staff and families work together to set personal and family goals?
Does our agency measure the impact of its services on the lives of children and families or do we simply tabulate the number of services we provide?
Do we offer preventive supports and services to help our families avoid more serious problems?
Are our services organized in response to family needs or are the kinds of services we offer constrained by the limitations of available funding and administrative rules?

Do we need to change?

How effective will we be in ten years if the needs of our client population continue to increase and we continue to do "business as usual?"

What resource limitations do we face in bringing more comprehensive services to our families?

How might closer relationships with other agencies help us improve outcomes for the families we serve?

How well are we connected with other agencies?

Do our line workers have effective working relationships with their counterparts in other agencies?
When our clients are referred elsewhere for services are we kept informed of their progress and changing needs?

How ready are we to engage in collaborative partnerships?

Do the community agencies serving children & families share a common vision? What is the history of collaborative partnerships in the community?
What lessons can we learn from past experience (or lack of it?)

Do we have close working relationships with the directors of other agencies that deliver services to the same families?
What do we know about other agency's current needs and priorities that might encourage them to discuss common problems and potential solutions?
Who are the leaders from outside the direct service community who are interested in the well-being of the community and who might take a leadership role in a collaborative effort or assist with the expansion and improvement of ongoing activities?
What are we willing to pay in terms of tangible resources and loss of unilateral control to formulate common goals with other agencies and to better serve our shared families?

STEP 2

Identifying Potential Partners-In creating partnerships, you want to find partners who will be a good fit for your program. A good match can make the difference later when you are searching for common ground on which to build a collaborative partnership. It is important to find partners who share your vision and have the resources and management capabilities needed to support the collaboration. Partnerships may begin in two ways: building on and formalizing an existing relationship, or seeking out new organizations. Many partnerships begin on an individual level, between people representing different agencies sharing a common interest. These personal relationships should be valued and cultivated as an important first step for crossing agency boundaries. Leaders of many successful partnerships point to supportive administrators and directors who allowed them to participate in networking activities that built relationships with other community service providers. Community involvement allows you to share services and also familiarizes you with the strengths and needs of other community groups providing essential information for creating a partnership.

When identifying potential partners, consider the following aspects:

- Who are the partners we already know and with whom we already share a relationship?
- Who are the other agencies or individuals that we do not know well but we believe will bring clout and commitment to the collaborative effort?
- Who are the individuals or organizations that may be in a position to block the collaborative efforts? What are the possibilities of including them and helping them to see the advantages of working together?
- What is the other agencies mission and philosophy?
- What resources and expertise might they bring to the collaboration? (Helpful resources include: connections, quality services, decision-making authority, integrity, & other skills such as charisma, visibility, and persuasion.)
- How well will their management structure adapt to working with another agency? Is the agency financially sound? How long has the agency been in existence?
- What is their organizational culture? Do they represent the community? Are different sectors of the community represented?
- How many partners do we want to recruit? (Keep it simple and small for initial effort.)

Pages 8a-8b are tools that can be used to help your agency identify community partners and the stages of collaboration.

PARTNER RECRUITMENT WORKSHEET

For the categories below, list the names of individuals or organizations that your group would like to recruit. You do not have to identify potential partners for all categories; instead, focus on potential partners that you believe are needed most and for the start-up phase of your effort.

Category 1: The Head Start Community (staff, volunteers, policy makers, and governing board members)

1. 3.

2. 4.

Category 2: Consumers (the people who use the services and/or represent Head Start parents, other groups such as civic groups, community associations, neighborhood clubs, tenant groups, etc.)

1. 3.

2. 4.

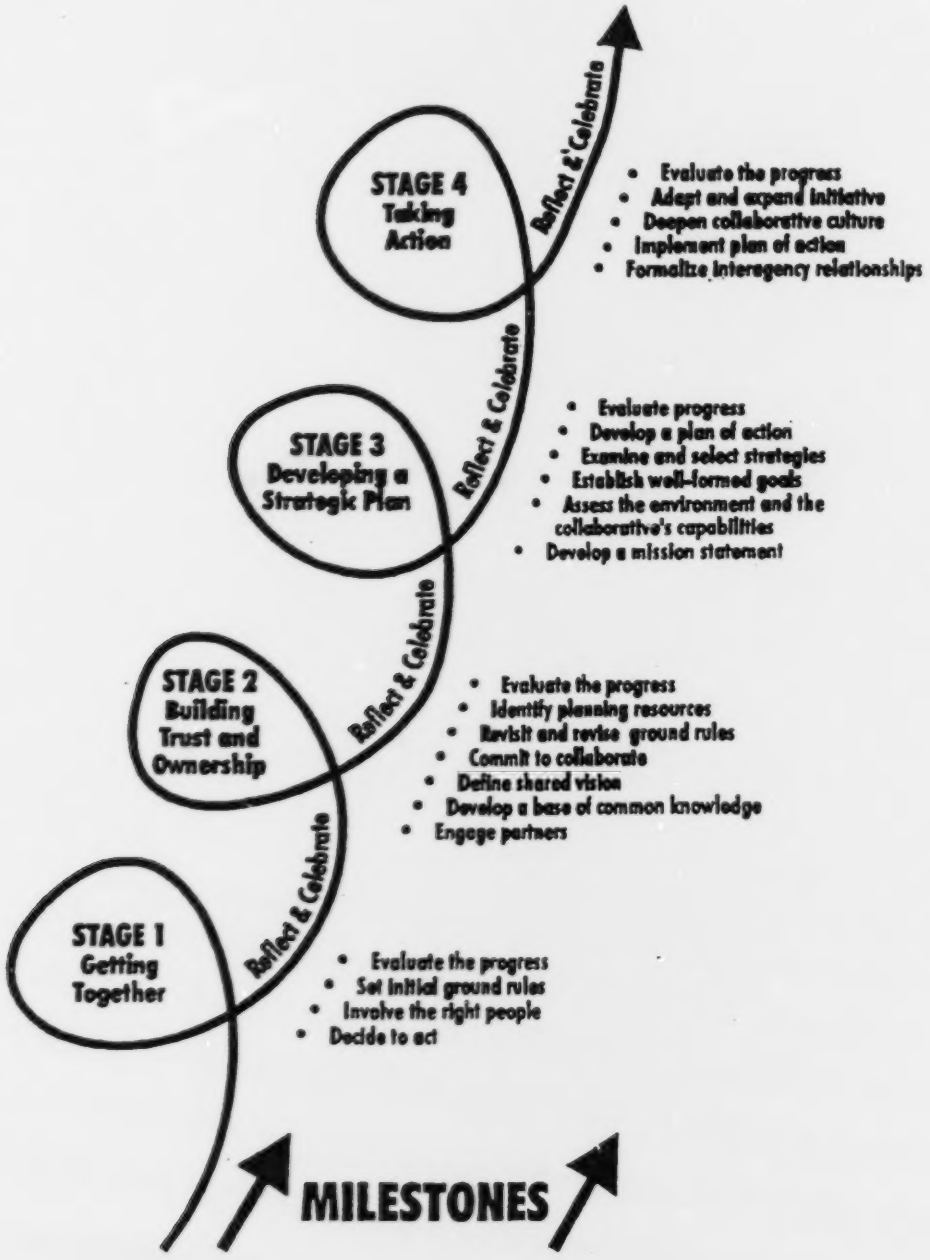
Category 3: Public Sector Organizations (schools, libraries, government support human service agencies, public housing, public safety, city planners, licensing, etc.)

1. 3.

2. 4.

COLLABORATION STAGES AND MILESTONES

Overview: The stages of collaboration do not follow a straight course. Instead, as illustrated below, stages may loop back, repeat themselves, or overlap.



Adapted from Atelia Melaville and Martin Blank with Gelareh Asayesh, *"Together We Can: A Guide for Crafting a Profamily System of Education and Human Services"* (Washington, D.C.: US Dept. of Education and US Dept. of Health and Human Services, 1993).

STEP 3

Identifying The Benefits:

As you begin to look at how this will benefit your agency, make sure you ask yourself: "What's in it for us?" "What's in it for the partners?" What's in it for children and families?" There are various benefits that can be gained by partnering with other early care and education agencies, with the most important one being more effective services for children and families. The benefits of collaboration not only affect children and families but the community as a whole. By braiding funding and other resources, agencies will be able to improve the early childhood experience of young children. Benefits include:

- Increasing health and social services for children and families.
- Providing full day, full year care for Head Start families.
- Developing a continuity of care for young children.
- Creating a method of expanding services in a cost effective manner.
- Opportunity to improve the quality of early care and education environments.
- Ability to serve a wider range of children and increase services for rural areas.
- Serving new communities.
- Providing more flexible hours of services that meet families work schedules.
- Strengthening the local early care and education system.

STEP 4

Developing the Collaborative Partnership:

This step requires the key players of each agency to come together to set the ground rules and plan for the development of a collaborative partnership. During this step, partners should take time to understand each other's organization and build trust and ownership. They must be committed to developing services that promote high expectations for all children and families. Communicating and being able to recognize the strengths of others within the partnership will help you to implement a shared vision. Using different methods to engage partners and build a base of common knowledge will set the stage for the development of a written agreement and plan of action.

The ***written agreement*** spells out the roles and responsibilities of each partner, identifies objectives, and details activities required to accomplish the objectives within established timelines. This agreement should identify the work to be accomplished and serve as a way to monitor and assess your progress toward your identified goal. The agreement should be written jointly and used to help maintain the focus of the partnership. Written agreements should include the following, but are not limited to:

- The partnership's mission
- Services to be provided
- Clearly stated goal(s) and objectives to be achieved with timelines
- Clearly defined roles & responsibilities of each partner
- Clearly defined lines of communication
- Financial arrangements that have been agreed upon
- Expected outcomes with timelines
- Duration of the partnership
- Signatures of organizations' executive directors and/or presidents

The ***plan of action*** identifies the task(s) to be completed for each objective, sets timelines for completion, and identifies who is responsible for doing each task. An action plan will provide the foundation for implementing your partnership. It is import to discuss availability of resources and personnel of partners to accomplish the mission and to have a backup plan. Depending on availability and other factors, the commitment level may vary throughout the partnership. But by communicating anticipated needs as soon as possible and establishing open communication on issues of this nature, you can prevent misunderstandings or disappointment as the collaboration moves forward.

Partnerships often fall apart when members perceive their role to be meaningless. Once partners are committed to the goals of the partnership, it is essential to keep them engaged. Active participation goes beyond attending meetings. If all partners assume significant roles they make invaluable contributions and feel that the time and energy they invest in the partnership is worthwhile.

Pages 10a-10i are tools that can be used in developing the collaborative partnership.

STEP 5

Managing the Partnership:

It is the responsibility of all parties involved to manage the process and implementation of the partnership. Because it is an ongoing process, everyone should have a clear understanding of the goals/expectations of the partnership and be informed of the rules and regulations for all funders and committed to abiding by them. You can manage a partnership by:

- ✓ Establishing regularly scheduled meetings
- ✓ Creating communication systems that work for all partners
- ✓ Deciding who will manage what aspect of the collaboration
- ✓ Developing reporting procedures, how and when they are to be generated and by whom
- ✓ Identifying one contact person from each organization and clearly communicate that to all staff
- ✓ Establishing concrete procedures to assess the partnership's progress, expected outcomes, and the developing relationship
- ✓ Ensuring that the written agreement addresses all services of the collaboration, legal issues and financial obligations of each partner
- ✓ Developing and implementing a record keeping system that includes polices and procedures

SETTING GROUND RULES

A successful collaboration requires that all partners contribute to and have a stake in the process. Ground rules can help partners use time wisely, share leadership, and head in the some direction. Ground rules cover planning & conducting meetings, resolving conflicts, making decisions, and maintaining ongoing communication among partners. The initiator of the collaboration should look at ground rules first, but partners should set them as they address the following questions:

- Where, when & how often will we meet?
- What will be our time frame for working together?
- How will we share responsibility for organizing & conducting the meetings?
- Who will prepare & contribute to the meeting agenda?
- What rules will guide discussion during meetings? Guard confidentiality?
- How will we handle information needs, data gathering & record keeping?
- How will we make decisions? By majority rule or consensus?
- What steps will we take to make sure decisions are not made behind the scenes?
- What will happen when there is a conflict?
- Under what circumstances will we seek a third-party facilitator?
- How will we evaluate the progress of our work?

There are no right or wrong answers to the above questions. The answers come from the partners of each collaborative effort.

DEVELOPING A SHARED VISION

Simply stated, a vision is a clear picture of what you hope to create. For collaborative partners, developing a shared vision is a critical juncture. Each partner is likely to come to the table with a different picture. Knitting the different pictures into a vision that captures the essence of the collaboration takes time and a lot of listening.

A shared vision is essential to sustaining a collaborative effort. It focuses on the possibilities for children and families to have a better life - not problems - and leads partners toward actions and desired results. A shared vision generates energy and motivation in partners and tells everyone where the collaborative is going.

DEVELOPING A MISSION STATEMENT

In this step, the shared vision that brought the partners together is refined & developed into a mission statement. A carefully crafted mission statement captures the shared vision (*the direction*), unique purpose (*what you want to achieve*), and the values & beliefs (*the rationale*) of the collaboration. The mission statement charts the future direction & establishes the basis for strategic planning decisions.

Mission statements focus on possibilities: they do not include the how-to's for achieving results. Ask the following questions as a guide:

- Does our mission statement describe what we will accomplish & for whom?
- Is the scope of work (how big, how many, how much) suggested in our mission statement?
- Does our mission statement convey our vision & a unique purpose? Is the purpose connected to, but different from, the missions of our individual organizations?
- Is our mission statement easy for everyone to understand?

A VISION FOR CHANGE

Collaborative partners need to develop a shared vision of a better life for children & families. What needs to change? How will life be better for children & families as a result of the collaboration? Imagine it is 5 years from now & life for Head Start children & families is better - how does it look? What do you see happening in the community?

Part 1. Write down a few phrases that describe your vision in the space below. Add pictures or symbols if you wish. Be as specific as possible so others can see & understand your vision. Make sure & do a check with your agency vision to see that they are compatible.

My Vision

Part 2. Develop a shared vision of a better life for children & families by discussing Part 1 above with your partners. What will the future look like as a result of the collaboration? Reach a consensus on what you want to see in the future.

Our Shared Vision Is:

DEVELOPING A MISSION STATEMENT

Develop your mission statement, keeping the questions in mind. It may be helpful to brainstorm words or phrases that describe your team's vision, purpose, values & beliefs. Jot down the words or phrases; decided which are most important and record them below.

Our Mission Statement

Vision:

Purpose:

Values & Beliefs:

Mission Statement:

Issues and Ideas to Talk About Later:

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

Conduct an environmental analysis by taking a look at what is happening or developing in your community. Depending on your mission, you may want to consider economic & population changes; funding trends; political & social forces; federal, state or local laws & regulations; agency policies & procedures; and other collaborations that already exist in the community. Talk about the changes or developments that you know about. Share as much information as you can about them and their likely impact. Identify information still needed by the team to make informed decisions for the plan.

1.

2.

3.

4.

Issue and Ideas to Talk About Later:

CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

The second part of this step involves an assessment of whether the collaboration has the ability to accomplish its mission Review the developments, trends & other factors you listed in the environmental analysis worksheet and decide which ones are the most likely to have the greatest impact on the collaboration Talk about the strengths (skills, talents, advantages, & resources) that you bring individually, and collectively to the collaboration as well as what you see as lacking. Consider the likely benefits of collaborative action as well as what might happen if no action is taken in the immediate future.

STRENGTHS

1.

2.

3.

4.

NEEDS

1.

2.

3.

4.

Issues and Ideas to Talk About Later:

ESTABLISHING WELL-FORMED GOALS

Goals are specific statements of what collaborative partners intend to do; they are indicators of the change partners want to achieve and they serve as measures for evaluating a collaboration's progress and for holding partners accountable. Long-term goals point to the results partners hope to see in 2-3 years or even further into the future. Short-term goals focus on more specific & immediate results and help to keep partners motivated & enthused.

Goals should be developed using the following criteria;

- *Does this goal focus on the positive?*
- *Is this goal realistic and achievable?*
- *Can this goal be measured?*
- *Is this goal stated in clear & specific terms?*

After goals are decided, they should be compared to the information on the environmental analysis & capacity assessment If large gaps are found between goals and potential to achieve them, revise the goals until the gaps are minimized.

Goals

God 1:

Goal 2:

Goal 3:

Issues & Ideas to Talk About Later:

SELECT STRATEGIES

In this step, the collaboration team brainstorms the various strategies or routes for achieving each goal. Once you have a list of possible strategies, take a close look at the potential impacts, benefits and costs of each strategy. Then select those you believe are feasible. Finally, review your mission statement and make sure the strategies selected are consistent with the collaboration's purpose, values and beliefs.

Goal 1:

Strategy 1

Strategy 2

Strategy 3

Goal 2:

Strategy 1

Strategy 2

Strategy 3

Goal 3:

Strategy 1

Strategy 2

Strategy 3

Issues and Ideas to Talk About Later:

DEVELOP A PLAN OF ACTION

This step involves:

- *Mapping out the actions for implementing the strategies selected by the collaboration team.*
- *Deciding who will take responsibility for each action.*
- *Setting target dates for completing each action.*
- *Deciding on standards or measures of accountability/evaluation, i.e., proof of actions taken, outcomes, etc.*
- *Prepare a budget of each action's expected costs.*

You can use any format for your collaboration plan. A simple worksheet is given below for an example.

Plan of Action

GOAL # _____ ***STRATEGY #*** _____

Actions to be Taken	*Who is Responsible?*	*By When?*	*With What Accountability?*	*At What Cost?*

TOTAL COST: _____

Issues and Ideas to Talk About Later:

STEP 6

Monitoring and Assessing:

The continued success of collaborations ultimately depends on being able to demonstrate positive results over time. Partners must find ways to show continued progress towards goals and objectives in all phases of their work. Ideally, goals should be set and performance measures should be used to track the success and promote the value of the collaboration. Collaborations should regularly collect data to measure progress toward their shared goal(s). Both process and program evaluations are important tools for tracking the partnership successes. By establishing indicators, collecting information, and analyzing data, partners can determine how well they are doing and/or what changes need to occur. Ideas to consider:

- Develop a monitoring tool or use one already developed that is compatible with program services;
- Complete monitoring at six (6) month intervals or as needed and provide feedback/follow-up;
- Provide training and/or technical assistance for areas that need improvement;
- Provide information on best practices and replicable models; and
- Share results and updates with everyone involved in the collaboration.

STEP 7

Strengthening the Relationship:

Once the collaboration is operating, it is imperative that you continue to build the relationship with the partner(s). Take the time to celebrate progress and show appreciation for those involved by acknowledging their efforts. There will be many challenges to overcome in this process, and working on the relationship will make it easier to respond to challenges in other areas. Listed below are several ideas to use in strengthening your relationship with your partner(s):

- Implement team-building activities using an outside facilitator.
- Develop conflict resolution methods to be used.
- Practice clear lines of communication. Have formal and informal open discussions.
- Make sure all staff know the lines of authority, communication, and how decisions are made.
- Implement joint staff training opportunities and allow time for them to get to know each other and share "lessons learned".
- Co-sponsor special events and share resources.
- Always be respectful of each organizational cultural and structure.
- Celebrate small and large successes.
- Always keep the mission and goals in mind.

Page 11a are tips partners can use to guide the successful operation of a partnership

COLLABORATION OPERATIONAL TIPS

- The collaboration team has a core group that regularly attends meetings.
- Meetings are held regularly. Other communication systems planned initially are used effectively.
- The collaboration team addresses conflicts in ways that strengthen rather than divide the team.
- The team supports the project manager, yet stays out of the way of operations.
- The community is aware of the team's work. All team members are taking responsibility for publicizing the successes of the collaboration.
- The team implements specific steps to raise public awareness of the needs of children & families.
- Each team member is following through with his/her commitment of resources to support the collaboration, either directly or in-kind.
- The team regularly assesses progress of its plan, and revises as needed.
- The team regularly reviews each partner's benefits from the collaboration and celebrates successes.
- Each team member communicates with his/her agency about progress in the collaboration. All agencies' staffs feel a part of it.
- The team consistently pays attention to shared leadership issues. Various members facilitate meetings, as needed.
- Team members are actively communicating the collaboration's issues and successes to their respective funding agencies and policy makers.

STEP 8

Evaluating:

As you implement your collaborative partnership, you need to evaluate each step. The word evaluation makes many people nervous because they think you are evaluating their personal performance. Make sure everyone understands that this is a systems-focused process and that the outcomes of the collaboration are being evaluated for the purpose of improving services for children and families. Two types of evaluations you might want to consider are:

Process evaluation ***explores how effectively the collaborative partners are working together and how their relationships could be improved. Methods for gathering this information includes:***

* ***Informal discussion among staff***
* ***Focus groups***
* ***Surveys***
* ***Anecdotal evidence***

Outcome evaluation ***measures the effects of your collaborative partnership on children and families. Indicators for success should relate directly to collaboration goals, be measurable and achievable. Methods for evaluating include:***

* ***Surveys of parents and others***
* ***Focus groups***
* ***Phone interviews***
* ***Compiling data from the family file information***
* ***Program information reports***

There may be several reasons for evaluating the collaborative partnership, so make sure you have a clear purpose for its use. One reason may be to share with funding resources in order to maintain or increase funding. Another reason may be to maintain support of leadership in partnering organizations. But the most import reason is to measure your success in improving services for children and families.

CONCLUSION:

Collaborative partnerships do not appear overnight, but must be cultivated and nurtured as the decision is made to partner. In conclusion, although there are many sand traps, collaboration is worth it for everyone involved. Effective planning and open communication are the keys. You have the steps…….. Now just do it!

Guiding principles for developing partnerships':

- Effectively creating continuity based on the strengths of families and responding to their needs/preferences.
- Involving parents and draw upon their knowledge of the community & insights about their children.
- Recognize and cultivate the interrelationships among all community agencies.
- Engage and maintain partners in meaningful ways.
- Know that change and improvements are the results of long-term commitments and the efforts of many concerned individuals working together.

Page 12a is a guide that can be used in developing evaluation tool(s).

EVALUATING PROGRESS

As an ongoing process, evaluation tells partners how well they and their strategies are working and guides decisions on changes or modifications to the collaboration.

Self-evaluation does not need to be complex. Finding out what is working and what corrections might make things work better can come from a relatively simple evaluation that includes measures of:

EFFORT

- Are our efforts helping us achieve our mission?
- What significant environmental factors have inhibited or helped our capacity to collaborate?
- Do we need to bring some new partners to the table?
- Is our Plan of Action being implemented?

EFFECTIVENESS

- Are we reaching the right people?
- Are we making an impact? What's different?
- What happened that we didn't expect?
- Is our Plan of Action still appropriate?

EFFICIENCY

- Are our goals attainable?
- Are our resources sufficient in light of the issues we face? The intensity of our strategies?
- Are we making the best use of our talents and strengths?
- What can we do to make our work more efficient?

SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATIONS:

The following programs have developed successful collaborative partnerships in their community and are willing to share information and "lessons learned".

BCMW
Director: Laura Hatch
(618) 532-4890
(Community)

City of Rockford Human Services
Director: George Davis
(815) 987-8282
(Full Day/Full Year)

Evanston Early Head Start
Director: Terry Mann
(847) 475-2661
(Full Day/Full Year)

Migrant Head Start
Director: Molly Parker
(217) 524-6318
(Full Day/Seasonal)

PACT
Director: Denise Conkright
(217) 773-3903
(Community)

PCCEO
Directors: Jennett Caldwell & Sandra Burke
(309) 671-3960
(Full Day/Full Year)

SIUC
Director: Cathy Reed
(618) 453-6448
(Community & Full Day/Full Year)

SIUE
Director: John Lovelace
(618) 482-6955
(Community & Full Day/Full Year)

Two Rivers Head Start
Directors: Jane Whitaker & Linda Ruhe
(630) 406-1444
(Community & Full Day/Full Year)

Champaign County Head Start
Director: Kathleen Liffick
(217) 328-3313
(Full Day/Full Year)

COLLABORATUION RESOURCES:

Listed below are places you can find information on collaboration and developing partnerships:

WEB SITES:

Working Together for Children: Head Start and Child Care Partnerships-by Nicole Oxendine Poersch & Helen Blank for the Children's Defense Fund
25 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 628-8787
http://www.childrensdefense.org

Child Care-Head Start Collaboration
Topics/publications/organizations/links.
http://nccic.org/cctopics/cc-hs.html

Child Care Collaboration
Locate virtual sites on childcare collaboration
http://www.hskids-tmsc.org

Child Care and Early Childhood Development
Augmentation Head Start Collaboration Project
http://www.srskansas.org/kidsnet/childcare-early-childhood.htm

The Child Care Partnership Project
A Guide to Successful Public-Private Partnerships for Child Care
http://nccic.org/ccpartnerships/guide/index.html

Region V QNET Resource Library
For listing contact Beth Sell, Resource Librarian at (800) 862-3725, ext. 270 or email: ***sellb@cesa5.k12.wi.us***
www.regionVQNET.org

Partnership Tools
QUILT
www.QUILT.org

MANUALS/PUBLICATIONS:

***Cooperation, Coordination, and Collaboration*:** A guide for Child Care and Head Start Programs. Published by the Oregon Head Start Collaboration Project. Oregon Department of Education. - (503) 378-5585 ext. 662.

Promising Partnerships I & II: How to Develop Successful Partnerships in Your Community. NHSA Partnership Office (703) 739-0876

Working Together for Children: Head Start and Child *Care* Partnerships. Children's Defense Fund. (202) 628-8787.

The Early Care and Education Community Collaborative Tool Kit: A collection of activities to support collaboration and early care and education. The Texas Head Start State Collaboration Project.
Fax: (512) 232-1853

Continuity in Early Childhood: A Framework for Home, School and Community Partnerships, 1999.

Principles of Successful Partnerships

Wisdom from Our Colleagues

TAKE TIME TO DEVELOP THE PARTNERSHIP. Get to know each other's philosophies and become familiar with each other's services. Be patient. Building trust and cultivating openness takes time. As partners, identify the non-negotiable things – anything you can't relinquish.

DRAW FROM THE STRENGTHS OF ALL PARTNERS. As you assess and come to know the expertise and resources of each partner, call on everyone's individual strengths to build your joint ventures. Recognize and speak often about the strengths of your partner(s)–this builds confidence on both sides.

SEEK OPENNESS, HONESTY AND MUTUAL RESPECT. When partners bring an open mind, the ability to listen, and the desire to explore new ways of working and delivering service, they foster innovation and growth for all partners. Communicate ideas clearly and concretely.

THRIVE ON AN ATMOSPHERE OF POSITIVE THINKING. Continually open up possibilities for the partnership and programming. Be flexible and reasonable.

RECOGNIZE AND SEEK EXCELLENCE. Knowing what is going well and what needs to be better are first steps in continuous Quality improvement. Partners should seek expert consultation and should measure their services against the highest standards and best practice.

HOLD TO THE VISION AND HOW TO GET THERE. Articulating the vision often and establishing clear, measurable steps on how to get there will move the partnership forward. Review goals and steps a. least annually, and use the goals to measure progress. Express critical as well as positive feedback in ways that it can be heard.

ABIDE BY RULES AND HONOR AGREEMENTS. Successful partnerships are based on respect for the rules and regulations for all funders and collaborators. Successful partnerships have detailed written agreements that are reviewed regularly.

IMPLEMENT A SYSTEMS-FOCUSED APPROACH. Partners with a systems-focused approach plan thoroughly and develop procedures so that their relationship functions smoothly. Systems become the backbone of the partnership's operations. Systems for oversight, self-assessment, customer/community responsiveness, and communication help to ensure high quality.

ADAPT TO CHANGING ENVIRONMENTS AND RESOURCES. Today's ever-changing norms, regulations, and family structures require that partners stay abreast of changes that will affect their partnerships and services and develop plans accordingly.

ACTIVELY AND WILLINGLY "DANCE' AND LAUGH. Have a sense of humor. Successful partnerships involve willing partners who want to "dance" together – it takes work to learn the steps, but remember to have fun.

(Quality in Linking Together, Early Education Partnerships): http://www.quilt.org

Making Partnership Meetings Work: Tips on Leading an Effective Meeting

Partnerships depend on regular communication, often through meetings scheduled to address specific issues. The meeting facilitator plays an essential role in enabling partners to use their time most effectively to reach their common objectives and strengthen the partnership.

1. The facilitator's role can set the tone for an effective meeting by:

- creating a climate in which everyone's viewpoint is welcomed and invited;
- clearly identifying the meeting's objectives and involving the group in meeting them;
- keeping the participants' efforts focused;
- intervening if procedural difficulties or problematic behaviors arise;
- helping the partners to evaluate their efforts; and
- bringing closure to each agenda item and summarizing agreements and next steps.

2. The facilitator promotes the effectiveness of the meeting by:

Active listening... Knowing how to listen is essential. When you really listen to all the partners, you show that you value their ideas and opinions. At the same time, you. are able to synthesize key points and keep the discussion focused and moving. Facilitators indicate that they are listening in a number of ways: through body language, by paraphrasing the speaker's main points, and by asking clarifying questions as needed.

Directing traffic... To make sure everyone's voice is heard, you need to make sure that only one person speaks at a time and that everyone who needs to speak has an opportunity to do so.

Regaining focus... To achieve the meeting's objectives, you need to keep partners focused or the task at hand. You can keep them on topic by restating the issue, requesting that only one issue be handled at a time, and checking to see that everyone knows what the issues are.

Recording in real time... To make sure that all the team members hear the same messages and that all points are heard, appoint a "recorder" – someone who can identify key points, decisions, and actions on newsprint so that everyone can see them and refer to them throughout the meeting.

Communicating Non-verbally... As a facilitator, you communicate not only through words, but through gestures and body language as wall. You indicate your Interest in people's comments partly through facial expression and posture. Be aware of your body language. Also be alert to what others am saying through their body language. Their gestures, posture, or facial expressions; can indicate that they have an issue they want to raise, a question they want to ask, or an agenda item they need clarified.

Encouraging..

As a facilitator, you are in a position to acknowledge contributions of individual partners. Also acknowledge the progress of the group as a whole.

Pushing...
Suggest alternative ways to handle an Issue if people appear to be spinning their wheels. Remind partners about priorities and keep them on track in terms of time. Push them to explore underlying issues.

3. The facilitator shares ground rules for each meeting. Some of these may work with your partners, or you may make up others with your partners:

- Make decisions by consensus.
- Share all relevant information.
- Explain the reasons behind your statements, questions, and actions.
- Publicly test assumptions and inferences.
- Make statements, and then invite questions.
- Stay focused. Discuss the topic thoroughly so everyone has a common understanding.
- Focus on interests, not positions.
- Be specific. Use examples to illustrate key ideas.
- All members are expected to identify and solve problems.
- Challenge opinions you don't agree with without attacking the individual who expresses them.
- Together, design ways of testing disagreements and solutions.
- Maintain a sense of humor.

Bibliographic Citations: *Mastering Change: Head Start Phase III Management Institute Trainer's Manual, 1995. Instructor's Guide for Facilitator Training.* 1993. U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Washington. D.C.

Head Start: Moving Ahead *Competency-Based Training Program, Facilitation: Fundamentals of*
Leading Meetings, 1998. Education Development Center, Inc., and Circle Solutions, Inc.

Source: Website of QUILT (Quality In Linking Together, Early Education Partnerships): http://www.quilt.org

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PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

The following programs and services are referred to in this Agreement.

HEAD START, BIRTH to AGE FIVE, including MIGRANT & SEASONAL

Head Start is a comprehensive child and family development program for low income families with children birth to age five including children with disabilities/special needs. Early Head Start programs also serve pregnant women. Migrant Head Start programs serve low income migrant and seasonal farm worker families. All Head Start programs operate in accordance with the Head Start Performance Standards. Head Start services are available in all counties in Illinois. Early Head Start services, birth to age three, are available in Cook, Will, Champaign, St. Clair, Madison, Peoria, Sangamon, Wabash, Edwards, Wayne, White, Hamilton, Saline, Gallatin, Clinton, Washington, Franklin, and Williamson Counties, and in the towns of Carpentersville, Aurora, and Elgin. Migrant and Seasonal Head Start services are based out of a central office in Springfield and cover the whole State, wherever there is a need.

Head Start agencies use a variety of program service options including: home based, center based half day, full day, full year, and extended day, depending on the agency and the need in the community. Migrant and Seasonal Head Start provides services in full day centers for the duration of the farm work in the particular service area.

Head Start involves parents in all aspects of the program, from volunteering with and individualizing services for their children to program governance. Head Start parent Policy Councils participate in the decision making process for aspects of program management including major changes in program design, location of services, policies and procedures, and hiring of staff.

Head Start staff and consultants conduct health, mental health, and developmental screenings and assessments for enrolled children and refer children, as needed, to appropriate resources for evaluation and diagnosis. Services may be provided in Head Start or in collaboration with other providers. Family support services are provided in the form of comprehensive case management, Family Partnership Agreements, intervention and referrals. Head Start works in partnership with various community agencies, including other early childhood programs, human service agencies, educational, and social service agencies to meet the needs and goals of enrolled families and children.

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ISBE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

The ISBE Early Childhood Block Grant includes the following three initiatives.

Pre-Kindergarten At Risk Initiative. This is an educational program for children ages 3-5 that also provides parents of participating children with educational and involvement opportunities. Pre-K At Risk programs serve children who, because of their home and community environment, are subject to such language, economic and like disadvantages that they have been determined through a screening process to be at risk of academic failure. This initiative is made up of two components. The screening component determines a child's eligibility and should be conducted on a community wide basis and developed and implemented in cooperation with other similar programs operating in the local school district such as special education, Head Start, prevention initiative, Early Intervention Child and Family Connections, and Child Find. All comprehensive screening procedures must include: criterion to determine at what point performance on an approved screening instrument indicates that children are at risk of academic failure, a parent interview, and vision and hearing screening. The educational program component must offer an appropriate education program that includes a parent education and involvement component, provides for student progress plans to be shared with parents, and contains a language and literacy development component for each child. The services may be either classroom or home-based and should be in collaboration with other services and resources available in the community. Additional priority in funding approval is given to school districts collaborating with child care providers to meet the needs of children requiring full work day and year round placement.

Parental Training Initiative. The parental training program is conducted for parents of children in the period of life from birth to kindergarten enrollment age, with special emphasis on single and married parents who are expecting their first child within three months, or who have no children other than a child less than three years old. The programs must provide activities requiring substantial participation of and interaction between the parents and children. These initiatives must include seven areas of instruction and training: child growth and development, including prenatal; childbirth and child care; family structure, function, and management; prenatal/postnatal care; prevention of child abuse; all aspects of interpersonal and family relationships; and, parenting skill development. Family fees may be assessed for training courses, not to exceed the per capita cost of the operation. These initiatives should be coordinated with other initiatives funded through the ISBE Early Childhood Block Grant, as well as other early childhood programs in the service area such as Head Start, Even Start, special education, and other birth-3 programs.

Prevention Initiative. The aim of this initiative is to create a partnership to support the development of infants and children from birth to age three by focusing on the child and family through a network of child and family service providers, offering coordinated services to at-risk infants and toddler and their families. The initiative provides case management services to coordinate existing services available in the region, provided through implementation of an individual family service plan. It also provides a referral system to place three year old children in other early childhood programs after leaving the prevention initiative program.

ISBE EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION

The ISBE early childhood special education services are funded with federal funds under P.L. 94-142, state and local funds. Local school districts and special education cooperatives provide instructional programming and/or related services. Eligibility for services is determined by a Multi-Disciplinary Conference (MDC) based on results of a case study evaluation. Age eligible preschool children are diagnosed in the categories found on page 4 (disabilities definition) of this Agreement.

According to the law, children with disabilities aged 3-21 are entitled to a free, appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. Least restrictive environment (LRE) means that, to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities are educated with children who are non-disabled and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. Early childhood special education services may be provided in a variety of settings including: public/private preschool, child care, Head Start, kindergarten, blended or team teaching inclusion settings, home, itinerant services outside the home, early childhood special education settings, residential facilities, and/or separate schools. All special education and related services must be provided at no cost to parents.

When a child with a disability is determined eligible for special education, a team that includes parents works together to develop the Individual Education Plan (IEP). The IEP includes: a statement of the child's present levels of performance; a statement of annual goals, including short-term instructional objectives; a statement of the specific special education and related services to be provided to the child and the extent to which the child will be able to participate in regular education programs; the projected dates for initiation and duration of services; appropriate objective criteria, evaluation procedures, and schedules for determining at least annual achievement of objectives; and, transition services.

Related services are supportive services required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education and include: transportation, speech/language pathology and audiology, psychological services, physical and occupational therapy, recreation including therapeutic recreation, counseling including rehabilitative counseling, orientation and mobility services, and medical services for diagnostic or evaluation purposes. Related services also include school health and social work services and parent counseling and training.

IDHS CHILD CARE PROGRAMS

The IDHS Child Care Program provides low-income families with universal access to affordable child care. Central to the Child Care Program is its commitment to serve all working families whose income falls below 50% of the 1997 state median income ($21,819 for a family of three), or up to 160% of the federal poverty level. "Working families" include teen parents in high school, TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) parents in IDHS-approved employability activities, and non-TANF families in education/training who meet the employment requirements.

Parents may secure a subsidy for child care costs by either obtaining vouchers (certificates) through the IDHS-funded Child Care Resource and Referral agency (CCR&R) in their community or enrolling their children in child care programs holding contracts with IDHS. Under the voucher system, the CCR&R agency determines family eligibility and parents may use the voucher at the child care facility of their choice, provided the facility meets all legal requirements. Through the site-administered contract system, families may apply for licensed care from a statewide network of more than 200 providers.

Another integral part of the Child Care program is the CCR&R system. IDHS contracts with twenty-two (22) agencies for these services in sixteen (16) Service Delivery Areas statewide. In addition to administering the voucher subsidy program, the CCR&R's are responsible for providing these core services:

- provide consumer education and referrals to child care to parents in their communities
- deliver training and assistance to child care providers to improve the quality of care offered
- help develop new child care resources in communities where they are needed
- maintain an accurate child care database able to provide up-to-date information to parents
- record and analyze data on child care supply and demand to support community capacity building

IDHS EARLY INTERVENTION

IDHS Early Intervention is a statewide, family-centered service system that finds and helps children birth to 36 months of age who have disabilities or developmental delays. These infants and toddlers are eligible for special early intervention services defined in Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), for which IDHS is the lead agency.

Children eligible for early intervention services are experiencing delays in at least one of these areas: cognitive development; physical development, including vision and hearing; language and speech development; psycho-social development; or, self-help skills. Children diagnosed with a physical or mental condition with a high probability of resulting in developmental delays are also eligible.

Families access the Illinois Early Intervention Services System through the Child and Family Connections (CFC) office in their local area. These offices serve the entire state and are operational in twenty-four locations throughout the state. These regional offices provide intake service coordination, assist with eligibility determination, and coordinate development of the initial Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP).

Early intervention services are available statewide through a network of enrolled providers and include: assistive technology devices and services; audiology, aural rehabilitation and other related services; developmental therapy; family training and support; health services; medical services for diagnostic/evaluation purposes; nursing; nutrition; occupational therapy; physical therapy; psychological, social work, and other counseling services; service coordination; speech/language therapy; transportation; and, vision services.

Developmental evaluation, assessment, IFSP development and service coordination are available at no cost to families. Ongoing early intervention services are authorized and provided in accordance with the eligible child's IFSP in the most natural setting for the child and family. Families may be assessed a fee for some ongoing services based on an ability to pay.